

Secretary Glickman Announces New FSA Administrator

Secretary Dan Glickman recently announced the appointment of Keith Kelly, a former director of the Arizona Department of Agriculture, as the new administrator of the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Kelly, a native of Red Lodge, MT, has spent the bulk of his professional career as a public servant working on behalf of U.S. agriculture. He was appointed the first director of the Arizona Department of Agriculture in 1990 and served in that position until his selection to head the Farm Service Agency at USDA. From 1981-1988, Kelly served as deputy director and director of the Montana Department of Agriculture.

In addition to his work at the Montana and Arizona departments of agriculture, Kelly served as administrative assistant to the Montana Lieutenant Governor from 1977 to 1980. In this position, he served as the chairman of the Governor's Ad Hoc Committee on Agriculture.

Kelly holds a masters degree in agriculture economics from Montana State University. He and his wife, Norma Jean, have four children.

USDA Service Centers...Developing Vibrant, Sustainable Rural Communities in Partnership With America.

Editor's note: With USDA Service Center implementation entering its third year, we thought it would be interesting and helpful to take a look at where we've been with the effort and where we eventually hope to wind up. Starting with the June issue of the USDA Service Center News, we began covering a different facet of the service centers story with background and strategic plan chapters. This month we will feature the service center concept and customer service initiatives chapters of the service center "story."

Customer Service Concept

The USDA Service Center Concept is a cornerstone of the Department reorganization efforts begun in 1994. USDA Service Centers offer one-stop service to customers, with access to multiple agencies that provide high quality service from one location. By consolidating individual field

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LAN/WAN/Voice Project Installations Moving Ahead

Debra Wardle

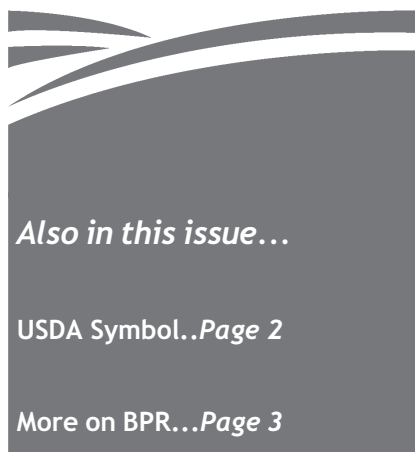
LAN/WAN/Voice Project

Bringing together shared voice, data, and satellite telecommunications for USDA Service Centers and support



offices is the formidable task of the LAN/WAN/Voice Project. So far the LAN/WAN/Voice Project Team has obligated \$72.5 million in delivery orders for telecommunications technology and services. Pilot offices were installed in November

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Ever Wonder Where the USDA Symbol Came From?

We wondered, too. So we called the USDA Office of Communications Design Center and asked about the new symbol.

We were told that the new symbol was created by USDA through a collaborative effort of public and private sector team members working through an objective process, involving the review of over 21,000 existing agriculture-related images! From this tremendous review effort, 20 new symbol designs were created and modified before a working committee made its recommendation.

The Secretary ultimately selected a graphic representation of the foundation of all agriculture — the soil. The Department's initials are the most recognizable element and unique to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These two elements combined, formed the new symbol. It stands for all of USDA's activities in its mission areas and agencies.

It has been successfully used in both print and electronic media. The new symbol gives consistent identity to the Department, increases public perception of the value of USDA information products, and brings economy of scale to visual information work.

For questions on "where and when to use or not to use," as well as other information, such as color,

size, reversals, etc., consult the Visual Management Guide, The USDA Symbol Its Purpose and Use (August 1996).

LAN/WAN...

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1996, and IBM began full installations last January.

As of May, the contractor had completed 260 full installations and 284 partial Dedicated Loan Origination Sites (DLOS) installations. The project team plans to have IBM begin completion of installation work this summer, with new emergency offices being the first priority followed, in order, by prior installations requiring revisits, new DLOS locations, and any additional offices approved by the Office of the Chief Information Officer.

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agency offices into USDA Service Centers, or collocating offices, USDA can provide better, more efficient service and reduce costs to taxpayers. Agencies share space, equipment, resources and information in the service centers.

One-stop service offers customers:

- greater customer convenience in access to USDA programs;
- voice and data telecommunication linkage capability between offices and Service Centers;
- high quality customer service;
- reduced cost and greater efficiency for customers and taxpayers; and
- close, working partnerships among USDA, other Federal agencies, State and local governments, organizations, communities, and customers.

When the field reorganization was originally initiated, the empha-

sis was strictly on county office streamlining and consolidation. The objective was to reduce USDA's presence from approximately 3,700 locations to approximately 2,500 locations. The focus of this Administration has been and continues to be on enhancing customer service. If we must deliver through a leaner USDA, and the realities are that we must, then we are committed to do so more efficiently and effectively. USDA Service Center agencies worked with President Clinton's and Vice President Gore's National Performance Review initiative to develop Service Center Customer Service Standards for Service Centers.

Collocation does not just create one-stop shopping for the customer. The Service Center Implementation Team also has a four-pronged effort to reengineer USDA's field operations. This effort includes: Office Consolidations; Customer Service/Change Management Training; Business Process Reengineering (BPR); and Information Technology development.

The Service Center Implementation Team (SCIT) has initiated a major training effort for equipping partner agency field staff to:

- effectively deal with current and future changes;
- to think and operate as a team instead of distinct agencies; and
- to provide extraordinary customer service.

So far, customer focus groups and surveys have been completed, Customer Service Training/Change Management Training has been developed, and a Customer Complaint and Feedback System is under development. Additionally, the SCIT facilitates BPR for a common computing environment to

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support efficient program delivery by USDA teams in one-stop USDA Service Centers.

Customer Service Initiatives

To ensure the best possible service, USDA has asked customers what they valued in service delivery. To find the answers, focus groups and surveys were used. This customer information, in turn, was presented to frontline employees via Change Management/Customer Service Training.

Focus Groups: The USDA Service Center partner agencies, supplied staff to conduct 37 focus group meetings with customers in 19 States around the country. As a result of the focus group meetings, customer-defined customer service performance standards have been published and distributed to USDA Service Centers (USDA Program Aid 1560, June 1996, "USDA Service Centers...In Partnership with Rural America"). Focus group customers also identified a need for a simple and safe complaint and feedback system. A prototype system has been developed and will be pilot tested in several States this fiscal year.

Surveys: In 1996, FSA conducted its second nationwide survey of producers who were asked about:

- the service provided in the USDA Service Centers;
- the forms, the communications used;
- and alternative ways to conduct business with the Centers.

Rural Development likewise surveyed its customers and has

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By The (New) Book

Nathaniel M. Deutsch
Team Leader

**Service Center Administrative
Management BPR Team**

Has this happened to you? You're meeting with a producer to assist her with applying for a USDA program. She asks you a question. You think — you know you've seen something on that come through, but you can't quite remember what it was or in what form. Was it a regulation? Was it a notice? Was it a policy? Was it a handbook? Whatever it was, has it been filed yet or is it sitting in that big pile of stuff on top of the cabinet waiting to be filed? You start searching and searching....

Well, big changes are planned to help resolve this dilemma, and lots of others like it. The Service Center Administrative Management Business Process Reengineering (BPR) Team (see article in the June newsletter) delivered its report and recommendations last month. The team recommends some basic changes in the way USDA takes care of its administrative business. It envisions dramatically simplified, streamlined, paperless administrative processes which take advantage of new technology to help folks at Service Centers get their work done more quickly and easily.

For example, you'll be able to answer a producer's question by quickly accessing all guidance on the programs through your computer. You'll be able to conduct a search of the directives database by entering a key word or phrase, such as "wetlands delineation" or "wheat price support" or "single-family

housing loans." The system will present you with a list of relevant directives, which you can then access with just a click of your mouse.

A pipe dream? Hardly. The enabling technology exists today. The team's recommendations emphasize the urgency of installing a common computer environment and connectivity in every Service Center and using it to fulfill the business needs in the areas of directives, hiring, travel, and fleet management.

Within a couple of years, you'll be able to learn of job openings through your e-mail and then apply for jobs on-line. No paper should be necessary. All your travel arrangements will be paperless, as will your travel voucher when you return from your official travel. Similarly, the fleet of government-owned or government-leased vehicles will be shared by the three mission areas (NRCS, RD and FSA) and managed and tracked through an on-line system.

The BPR team's work emphasizes the importance of not merely automating these processes, but dramatically simplifying them first, cutting out steps which don't add value, streamlining the number of approvals needed for a given activity, and empowering employees at the lowest level practical.

The team estimated implementation costs at just under \$7 million over a 16-month period, excluding efforts already under way to create a common computing environment and install a nationwide LAN/WAN/Voice system. Upon implementation, the team estimated that up to \$15 million a year in direct costs could be saved, and this does not

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even include considerable savings in paper. The team also estimated that \$87 million worth of staff time — your time — would be freed up each year to be redirected to higher priority program delivery activities. And your job would be easier to do.

The National Food and Agriculture Council applauded the group's efforts and immediately set in motion a series of steps to implement the recommendations. Over the next few months, work teams will be created to begin transforming the team's vision to reality. Excitement is building as the Service Center partner agencies turn a significant corner toward the future. We'll keep you posted.

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piloted a "call-back" telephone process to provide rapid, local information about ongoing service quality. NRCS conducted many town meetings and forums around the country. An insert summarizing the results of the listening sessions is included in the USDA Service Center brochure containing the customer service performance standards.

Customer Service Training: To ensure the USDA Service Centers meet customer service standards, Customer Service Training was developed for Service Center employees who work directly with the public. The goal is to do more than just meet customer expectations. The goal is to train employees to meet customer service standards and motivate them to exceed these standards.

This year, about 20,000 employees will be trained.

Customer Complaint and Feedback System: The prototype customer complaint and feedback process is based on customer opinions and recommendations acquired in focus group interviews and surveys. It is also consistent with the guidelines of the National Performance Review team, as presented in its March 1996 report "Serving the American Public: Best Practices in Resolving Customer Complaints."

Customers initiate the feedback process by filling out a comment and complaint self-mailer card, that is addressed to the State office which has the primary responsibility to track the complaint process and assess its operation. Although the process is intended to resolve complaints at the lowest level possible, it maintains the flexibility for resolution at the Service Center, State office, or national level.

Lessons Learned: We learned, among other things, that good customer satisfaction ratings are not enough. First, specific measures of program delivery must also be considered. Second, customer-defined standards and goals are essential to adequately determine how we are doing and how we need to improve. In short, we have to systematically listen to customers and respond to their concerns and needs.

Next month: Change Management Training and Business Process Reengineering

Service Center News is a publication of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Food and Agriculture Council (FAC). Its purpose is to report progress of USDA Service Centers implementation to employees.

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